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HARAMBEE AFRIKAN CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

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HARAMBEE AFRIKAN CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

CREED

Together we seek to know that which is us, to expand our collective consciousness of who we are and whence we come. We exalt in the fact that Afrikans are beautiful in our own right rather than at the expense of any other ethnic group. And in the true spirit of the Swahili word, "harambee," we promote the idea that cultural exchange is germane to human growth.

JEALOUSY & SISTERS JOBS

As we continue to set the stage for Black progress across the rest of the nation and the world, there are going to be the inevitable divide-and-conquer tactics that other struggling groups encountered. The primary and perhaps most successful one, to date, has been the status quo's incessant attempts to pit Black women against Black men. It is taking place here in Milwaukee and elsewhere in the na ion. We would be wise to heed the following advice.

In the first instance, what's wrong with Black women being appointed, hired, promoted or given other advances by the white man? On the one hand, I could understand it if those who are voicing concerns were saying "don't get involved in his system." But they're not. Most of the bloods who are concerned about the white man "using" Black women are ONLY JEALOUS BECAUSE BLACK MEN ARE NOT GETTING THE JOBS. This should and would not matter were our intentions honorable in the first place. What difference does it make if the slave is male or female? Either is a slave!

Secondly, Black women are deserving. They've paid their dues and have had to endure our neglect of them. With all this emphasis on Black males as an "endangered species," how come nobody is saying anything about the individual who produces these Black males? For instance, Jawanza Kunjufu has a book entitled "The Conspiracy To Destroy Black Boys." But here's what this means to me: ANY CONSPIRACY TO DESTROY BLACK BOYS WOULD HAVE A PRIMARY AND MAJOR IMPACT ON THE BLACK WOMAN BECAUSE SHE'S BEARING THE CHILDREN, TAKING CARE OF THE HOUSE DURING THE DAY OR WORKING AS A SINGLE PARENT, AND SHE'S THE ONE BEARING DAUGHTERS WHO WILL HAVE TO SOCIALIZE WITH, DATE AND/OR MARRY THESE SAME BLACK "BOYS."

So, as we continue to talk about the shortage of Black males on campus, in the workplace and in the community, we would be wise to understand

that this is not an us-vs-them situation. She's Black and so are we. Her success does not inevitably come at our expense. This brings me to point three.

I think a lot of Black men are getting scared because of what we've done to sisters in the past. When we got jobs and promotions, how did WE act? When we had the chance to marry or settle down, DID WE? Or did we, instead, decide to be playboys at the expense of sisters' reputations and the children we produced?

You know the answer. So whatever is the case in your individual situation, what you did is coming back to haunt you. Not all brothers turned their backs; so, if you didn't, then you aint got nothing to worry about. But if you did, then this could be a case of the chickens coming home to roost.

Fourth, if she's successful, we can guarantee that Black kids will be provided for. As Black men, we're being incarcerated, killed off and co-opted. So what difference does it make if we get a promotion or not? We're being fired for no other reason other than the fact that the white man didn't have a good time with his wife the previous evening. But if it is the Black woman is getting jobs and the power to go with them, she'll be more likely to share with us than we did with them...

BLACK WOMEN LIKE ANGELA DAVIS, MAYA ANGELOU AND DEBBIE ALLEN HAVE NEVER BEEN THREATS TO ANYONE'S MANHOOD. THEY'RE SISTERS WHO ARE MAKING A NAME FOR BLACK PEOPLE--A POSITIVE ONE. PEOPLE LIKE ANNETTE "POLLY" WILLIAMS, MARCIA COGGS, GWEN MOORE, NOT TO MENTION ROSSLIND ALLEN, SHARYNE BAYLOR, ELIZABETH COGGS-JONES AND OTHERS ARE NO THREAT TO ME. But when bloods start pointing fingers ata a sister because she has status or a position, that says more about him than about her. And if he's concerned, then he's got an obligation to talk with her and discuss her intentions, not backstab and spread rumors.

(Cont. on page 10)

A QUESTION OF BEAUTY: 'EBONY' WOMEN

I was in second or third grade. It was the first or second day of school following summer break. Our teacher, a Sister by the name of Ms. Ashford, I believe, was asking her students to stand up before the class and give presentations about what we had done during the summer. After maybe five or six of us had given our presentations, Ms. Ashford called upon Beatrice. Beatrice began to stand up. But before she got to her feet, the thought occurred to me that it was silly for the teacher to have asked Beatrice to talk about her summer vacation. You understand, Beatrice was very dark of skin and her hair wasn't pressed. How in the hell, then, could she have possibly done anything worth talking about--How can an ugly girl have any fun? I commenced to laughing, was tickled damned near to death. My stomach got to hurting, I was laughing so hard. I fell to the floor laughing. Many of the other children in the class joined me in my amusement. As I recall, Beatrice never gave her presentation. All of us, teacher and pupils, were African. We had a good time, we children anyway--all but Beatrice.

What was this if not sickness, that we African children ridiculed one of our own on the basis of her being "too black"? We speak of racism and complain about the perpetrators of it, as we should. But, too often, while we are sensitive to racism, we are oblivious to our own internalized racism, in which we take the racist attitudes directed against us by the racists and direct them against ourselves and each other. In the area of physical beauty, we look at ourselves and each other, not through our own eyes, but through the eyes of the Caucasian. He has decided that his people are the standard by which judgements on beauty are to be made. And, generally, we have accepted this. Why? Racist institutions(school, church, and commercial media) inculcate us with this madness. As insidious as this is, what is worse is that much, if not most, of the "black" media(print and television) perpetu-

ate this idea that African people can only have physical beauty inasmuch as our features approximate those of Caucasians.

The effectiveness of this programming, whether by the Caucasian-run institutions or by those run by African people, can be readily seen when we look at the fact that many of us still equate "good" hair with hair that is straight; that many of us still, in moments of anger against dark-skinned Sisters or Brothers, are very quick to use "black" as a derogatory expletive; that, proportionally, we spend more money than any other group in this country on hair-"care" and skin-"care" products, in an effort to look "better."

Being curious as to the degree to which an African publication would be presently promoting the idea that there is something ugly about characteristic African physical features, I have just finished a survey of the February through May editions of EBONY magazine. In this survey, I examined all color ads in which African women were prominently portrayed. There were a total of 116 such ads, a few of which were repeated from one edition to another or/and in the same edition. In examining these ads, I focused in on skin color(dark, medium or brown-skinned, or light), noses(broad or sharp), lips(full or thin), and hair(wooly or braided, wavy or curly, or straight). In some instances, because of the quality of the picture, I was unable to accurately determine the characteristics of some feature(s). And in some cases, a particular feature - a nose for example - would be somewhere at the mid-point between Africoid and Caucasoid such that I could not put it into a category, which is why none of the following categorizations add up to the 116 total.

Skin color: dark, 11; medium, 44; light, 59.

Nose shape: broad, 49; narrow, 36.

Lip shape: full, 38; thin, 33.

(Cont. on page 11)

EDITORIAL POLICY

The HARAMBEE FLAME, the monthly publication of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization (parent chapter of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization, Inc.), is a pan-Africanist newsletter. The FLAME's priority, with respect to news and views, is African people, events and developments which affect us and are, or should be, of concern to us. The FLAME does not recognize any distinction between African people based solely on place of birth. References in the FLAME to African people are made on the basis of our common ancestry. An exception to this is the reprinting of articles, or excerpts thereof, from other publications, in which cases we do not alter "black" or other terms designating African people. This is our practice because we do not wish to diminish the integrity and authenticity of the articles we excerpt from.

Articles contained in the FLAME do not necessarily represent the official positions of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization unless they are accompanied by a statement identifying the views as being those of the organization. Generally speaking, all unsigned articles are by the editor, Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa (aka David Rice).

We encourage you to submit articles to the FLAME. Please enclose with your submission a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Articles should not exceed 900 words, though longer pieces will not be automatically rejected. Short stories are subject to the same restriction with respect to length. We also welcome poetry and graphics. We are looking for poems which address African folks' lives, the conditions we face, and our struggles to rise above those things which hinder us. We are not looking for poems which sacrifice power and beauty for the sake of uniform rhythm and/or rhyme. Send submissions to the editor c/o HARAMBEE FLAME; P.O. Box 2500; Lincoln, NE; 68502-0500.

FROM OTHER SOURCES

Farrakhan Meets With Alderman McGee In Milwaukee

"...On Wednesday night, May 9th...Nation of Islam leader, the Honorable Louis Farrakhan, was in town to attend the funeral of local NOI director Jerry Muhammad...he and Alderman Michael McGee met to discuss, in detail, directions for Black people, McGee's newly formed Black Panther militia, and a plethora of subjects that will be recounted in next week's edition of The Milwaukee Courier.

"It was Farrakhan who called for the meeting with the 10th District Alderman...

"McGee, who will be holding another community meeting and rally of his Militia on May 19th, said that he was 'humbled by the experience'.

"McGee said that Farrakhan pledged to support his endeavors and praised McGee for his ability to 'get the attention of the young people across the country'...

"McGee said that during the meeting a number of tactics were discussed, including issues germane to Black veterans, an area that McGee viewed Farrakhan as 'being very sensitive to and knowledgeable about'. Other issues included comparing concerns about 'gang activity' in Milwaukee with the activity in the cities where Farrakhan had visited and spoken in. The two leaders also discussed 'a growing militant attitude on the part of the Black unemployed'..."

-From "The Meeting, 1990," which appears on pages 1 and 3 of the May 19 THE MILWAUKEE COURIER(Milwaukee, WI).

Japan In Partnership With So. African Government

"...The Japanese presence in South Africa has steadily increased over the years so much so that today Japan has supplanted the U.S. and Western Europe as racist South Africa's leading trading partner. However, the U.S. still holds the dubious honor of primary source of finance capital.

"Japan is South Africa's leading buyer of coal, iron ore, asbestos and andalusite. In 1985, Japan imported 55 percent of its chrome from South Africa, 68 percent of its platinum(for electronic parts and the essential catalyzer for auto exhausts), 54 percent of its manganese and 85 percent of its panadium, the essential material for superconductors.

"At the present, almost all the famous large Japanese firms are deeply involved in the apartheid economy...

"The Japanese government has repeatedly violated United Nations Security Council resolutions prohibiting the exporting of computer technology and nuclear materials to racist South Africa..."

-From "Japan's Aparthied Connection," which appears on page 11 of the May 3 THE FINAL CALL (Chicao, ILL.).

Nigeria: Financial Symphony/Political Strings

"Nigerian university students, lecturers and campus workers are rebelling against a $140 million World Bank loan for 'university rehabilitation'...

"Students initially applauded the scheme, but quickly turned against it when the conditions were exposed by the press and denounced by academic staff and university workers' unions as inimical to Nigerian interests.

"Opponents of the loan say the World Bank is deman-

ding a freeze on all staff recruitment. Universities are to retrench academic and non-academic staff and close down some faculty departments and programs...

"The bank is also reserving the authority to approve the manufacturers who will supply all equipment, machinery, journals and books used in the universities...

"Press critics also say the World Bank is demanding an allocation of $12 million of the loan for wage hikes for foreign professors teaching in Nigeria...

"This anti-loan revolt is part of a trend of opposition against the World Bank-IMF structural adjustment program...

"...as part of the structural adjustment program, the government is busy signing investment protection agreements with Western governments...

"These pacts are legal shields for foreign investors under local and international laws...

"The agreements provide guarantees against any political or legal actions the investors consider threatening to a 'peaceful' atmosphere for their operation. In decades past, such pacts implied military intervention by investors' governments to protect their citizens' capital..."

-From "Nigerians Blast World Bank," which appears on page 17 of the May 23 THE GUARDIAN (N.Y., N.Y.).

Two Schools Of Thought In "Black" Studies

"After more than 20 years in the margins of academia, black studies is finally getting some respect. Private and public colleges across the country are suddenly recruiting candidates and devoting considerable resources to revive the moribund programs. This...should have been good news

for those attending the 13th annual Black Studies Conference here(Chicago) April 25-28. But conference participants were decidedly apprehensive about the university community's urgent embrace of their curricula.

"...Much of the new interest in the discipline...is being generated by theorists who have no history of involvement with that ("Black" student)movement(of the 60s).

"...Armstead Allen, an African-American studies professor at Chicago's Olive-Harvey College...who established the annual conference, adds that he distrusts the motives of the new wave of black studies proponents. 'We define black studies as having three missions: to generate a body of knowledge regarding the black experience and the forces that impinge on it; to serve as a focus for developing black leadership talent; and to serve as a forum to link academic and community concerns', says Allen. 'From its very inception, black studies has sought tangible, not just theoretical, connections to the everyday concerns of the African community'.

"...At issue these days is whether the discipline will be defined by those with an ideological commitment to black cultural nationalism or by those with sensibilities seasoned by theories of literary criticism...

"(Henry Louis 'Skip') Gates, a 39-year-old African-American literature professor at Cornell University and a former MacArthur Foundation grant 'genius', has become the toast of academia...

"...Gates also is known for his persuasive arguments that African-American studies programs can act as a wedge to open the basic university curriculum to broader representation of this country's multi-cultural heritage...He selectively uses European critical theory(post-structuralism and deconstruction) to debunk notions of a sacred European canon...

"For Karenga(Maulana Karenga, associate professor

and chairman of black studies at California State University and author of several texts on black studies issues) and many other cultural nationalists who peopled the Black Studies Conference, however, Gates' strategic use of European literary theory is nothing to be proud of...he(Karenga) adds, 'We should be wary of using the vocabulary of other paradigms to describe the African-American experience...'

"Karenga's and Gates' divergent strains of the black studies movement seem irreconcilable to their respective advocates. But for conference panelist Harold Cruse...the issue is not so clear cut. Cruse dismissed the ideological antagonisms that divide the black studies community as ephemeral and superficial. 'What we need', he says, 'is a reformulation of our entire relationship to the American enterprise. And for that project we need Gates' as well as Karenga's input'..."

-From "Black Studies Debate: Use Or Lose The Canon," which appears on pages 7 and 11 of the May 16-22 IN THESE TIMES(Chicago, ILL).

JEALOUSY..

...And since we shared in the toil, trials and tribulations, we need to also be willing to share the triumphs and tributes. And when all is said and done, such sharing is the basis of a great nation, a great Black community. As Karenga cogently contends, "it is a moral and spiritual fact of no meagre importance that where we differ most is where we fit together most profoundly."

-The above is a shortened version of Matthew Stelly's "Jealousy Over Successful Sisters Can Hurt Community's Health," which appeared in the May 19 THE MILWAUKEE COURIER. We reprint this article with the permission of its author.

BEAUTY..

Hair: wooly or braided, 6; wavy or curly, 28; straight, 65.

To give explanation regarding the raw figures, let me begin with the matter of skin color. While the majority of the African women portrayed in the ads were of light skin, they were not a vast majority. This indicates a lessening of EBONY's obsession, as exhibited in past years, with light skin. On the other hand, the fact that only eleven Sisters were dark of skin and that only a couple of these were very dark suggests that EBONY may yet be of the position--"If you're black, get back."

Most of the Sisters had broad noses. However, many, if not most, of them I categorized as having "broad" noses only had broad noses to the extent that they were not particularly sharp or narrow. And only a small minority of these women's noses were flat.

Slightly more of the women had full lips than had thin but many had lips that were neither particularly full nor particularly thin, such that I did not put them into a category.

As the numbers on the question of hair make so evident, the great majority of African women were portrayed as having straight hair. As we know, while wooly hair is a characteristically African trait, our mating with Native Americans, Caucasians, and persons from other groups, and the raping of our women by Caucasian men during the many decades of chattel slavery have resulted in wide variations in hair texture, and other physiological traits, among us. But it is unquestionably the case that most of our Sisters who have straight/"good" hair have received it not from the genetic factor but from something more akin to Max Factor. There were a few instances where Sisters in these ads had blond hair, despite having medium/brown skin and other more or less African features.

(Cont. on page 14)

PUBLICATIONS

ACCENT/L.A.; Editor, James Edwards; The Forward Group; P.O. Box 43236; Los Angeles, CA.; 90043

NOMMO; Editor, Shonda Horbeck; 112C; 308 Westwood Plaza; Los Angeles, CA.; 90024

NIGERIA HOMENEWS; 173 Kilburn High Road; London, NW6; England

AFRICAN COMMENTARY MAGAZINE; 29 Pray St.; Amherst, MA; 01002

WEST AFRICA; West Africa Publ. Co., Ltd; 43-45 Coldharbour Lane; Camberwell; London, SE5 9NR; England

THE FREEDOM PRESS; Many Races Cultural Foundation; 10 So. Park Avenue; Rockville Center, N.Y.; 11570

THE BLACK SCHOLAR; P.O. Box 7106; San Francisco, CA; 94120

THE FINAL CALL; Editor, Abdul Wali Muhammad; FCN Publishing Co.; 734 W. 79th St.; Chicago, ILL; 60620

BURNING SPEAR; 7911 MacArthur Blvd.; Oakland, CA; 94605

The above-listed newspapers and magazines are, as far we know, owned by African people. We have listed them because they provide information and perspectives of the sort not typically offered in more Establishment-oriented periodicals. We suggest that you write for sample issues.

COMMUNITY NEWS

On Thursday, May 17th, the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization hosted a commemorative program at the State Prison in Lincoln, Nebraska to honor Malcolm X and to remind the prisoners in attendance of the ideas of this great African leader. The program included playing of a tape of Malcolm's speech, "The Ballot Or The Bullet"; the pouring of libation; and discussion of Malcolm's life and ideas and the application of those ideas to our present situation. An hour into the program, we were joined by representatives from the Washington, D.C.-based National Malcolm X Commemoration Commission, Ron Daniels, Deborah Robinson, Mercedes Falber, and Junette Pinkney, each of whom gave presentations on the impact the life and/or ideas of Malcolm X has had on their lives.

In Omaha, where Malcolm was born, there were several programs conducted in tribute to Malcolm, including a forum on Malcolm on the evening of the 18th which was addressed by Betty Shabazz(Malcolm's widow); Maulana Karenga, California-based scholar and developer of Kwanzaa; George Garrison, chairman of the Black Studies Dept. at the University of Nebraska at Omaha; Ron Daniels of the Commemoration Commission; and Malcolm's sister, Yvonne Little, and his brothers, Philbert, Robert and Wilfred Little.

On the morning of the 19th, there was a prayer service at Malcolm's birth site, followed by a unity parade and a commemorative ceremony at Horace Mann Jr. High School, at which addresses were delivered by State Senator Ernie Chambers, Avery Brooks("A Man Called 'Hawk'"), and others.

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BEAUTY..

What was the purpose of doing this survey and sharing with you the results? It was to get and share with you a small indication of how far we've come and how far we haven't in being able to appreciate our own physical beauty, particularly as this relates to African women. We must be mindful of the fact that we live in a racist country in which the racists decide who is beautiful and who is not. At the same time, we must be mindful that it is vital that we not accept Caucasian America's definitions of what constitutes our beauty.

As Africans, we have certain characteristic physical features, including: dark skin; wooly hair; broad, flat noses; dark eyes; and full/thick lips. These are the most obvious features that differentiate us from other so-called "racial" groups. We know that the degree to which we individually have these physical traits varies a great deal. We also know that none of us are responsible for the particular features we are born with. But whatever our individual features, we should be accepting and appreciative of them--whether we have wooly hair or straight, broad nose or narrow. The fact that many of us still believe that the farther our features are from being characteristically African the better-looking, or less ugly, we are is a sign that America has remained successful in maintaining us in a mind-set of self-contempt.

It is pathetic that we have regressed from that '60s time in which we were proud of our "fros" and "nachrals" to a situation in which our Sisters are ashamed of their nappy(We shouldn't be afraid of saying the word.) hair and Brothers are helping to affirm for them the ludicrous idea that natural African folks' hair needs to be straightened or "relaxed" in order to be pretty.

(We will conclude this article in the next issue of the FLAME and, in the meantime, encourage you to send your comments) -the Editor

BACK IN TIME

Despite the evidence of Black women's efforts during this time(around 1900), despite the evidences of character and determination, (Fannie Barrier)Williams was saying, Black men were "apt to look to look to other races for their types of beauty and character." "What our girls and women have a right to demand from our best men is that they cease to imitate the artificial standards of other people and create a race standard for their own."

Imitating those standards included color consciousness, Nannie Helen Burroughs charged, in a devastating article entitled "Not Color But Character": "There are men right in our own race, and they are legion, who would rather marry a woman for her color than her character," she said. "The white man who crosses the line and leaves an heir is doing a favor for some black man who would marry the most debased woman, whose only stock in trade is her color, in preference to the most royal queen in ebony."

Black men themselves commented on the phenomenon of their attraction to fair-skinned women. "It is generally the case," said the editor T. Thomas Fortune during a debate about Black identity, "that those Black men who clamor most loudly and persistently for the purity of Negro blood have taken themselves mulatto wives."

However, Burroughs did not confine her criticism to men on this score. She also struck out at women who used skin lighteners and hair straighteners. "What every woman who bleaches and straightens out needs, is not her appearance changed, but her mind changed ...If Negro women would use half the time they spend on trying to get white, the get better, the race would move forward apace."

Source: WHEN AND WHERE I ENTER: THE IMPACT OF BLACK WOMEN ON RACE AND SEX IN AMERICA by Paula Giddings.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The first annual catalog is now available from the Minority Publishers Exchange, a national network of nearly a thousand independent publishers of color. Over thirty publishers have books or products included in the catalog. The catalog includes books on career information, history, college, minority student services, family issues, women reference directories, cook books and audio tapes of some of America's foremost writers of color. Greeting cards, how to books, fiction and table games round out a wide selection of books and products listed in the catalog. Requests for the free 16 page catalog must include 65 cents for postage for shipping costs. Mail to Minority Publishers Exchange; P.O. Box 9869; Madison, WI; 53715. Or call (608)244-5633.

The Harambee Book Club describes itself as "the Book Club for African-American Families and Friends." It maintains a wide variety of books, tapes, and other products relating to African people, our cultures, history, etc. For an information packet on the book club, write to: Harambee: The Book Club for African-American Families and Friends; P.O. Box 603; Wilton, CT; 06897. The book club is not affiliated with the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization.

Fourteen African youth from Omaha completed their participation in the eight-week Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization(State Prison chapter) youth project on May 5, 1990. During the course of the project, members of the H.A.C.O. Youth Project Committee provided the young Sisters and Brothers with historical and other information to improve their levels of self-esteem and discussed with them problems and complexities faced by today's African youth in Omaha and throughout the U.S. generally. The project "graduates" received gold and black "Sons & Daughters of Imhotep" t-shirts and leather medallions portraying the continent of Africa. It is expected that another youth project session will begin around June 19th.